

## **‘Like a Butterfly Under Glass’:<sup>i</sup> the cancan, Loïe Fuller, and cinema**

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The six-year period from 1889 to 1895 saw three important premieres in the *fin-de-siècle* Parisian entertainment scene: the opening of the Moulin Rouge, home of the cancan, in 1889; Loïe Fuller’s first Parisian performance at the Folies Bergère in 1892; and the first public exhibition of film at the Salon Indien of the Grand Café in 1895. A number of film, dance and visual culture theorists have proposed various connections between the emergence of cinema and the live entertainment that preceded it in Paris (Brannigan 2003; Gordon 2001b; Gunning 2003; McCarren 2003; Schwartz 1998). A recurring narrative in many of these accounts is the claim that Fuller’s technological choreographies prefigured cinema’s transformation of the live body into the play of light on a screen (Brannigan 2003; Gunning 2003; McCarren 2003; Sommer 1975). This article aims to reconsider Fuller’s prominence in the lineage of early cinema in light of the author’s previous research on the history of the cancan, and literature from early film studies, dance studies, and research on nineteenth-century French performance by English and French literature scholars. The resulting argument is that Fuller’s work had more in common with the later development of narrative cinema than the aesthetic of early cinema, labeled the ‘cinema of attractions’ by Tom Gunning (1990). The cinema of attractions is repositioned here as part of a much longer discourse of the uncanny dancing machine that began in the Romantic era, and developed into a popular Parisian café-concert and dance hall aesthetic in the late nineteenth century. It is argued that an important role in the development of this aesthetic was played by the cancan, which began developing an uncannily mechanical dancing body and a corresponding mode of embodied spectatorship in the late 1820s.

### **Loïe Fuller: a ‘modern Salomé’<sup>ii</sup>**

Fuller was an American-born performer who rose to fame in Paris after premiering at the Folies Bergère in 1892. She was influenced by her experiences as a burlesque dancer in New York (including nautch dancing, an Indian dance form popularized in the United States in the late nineteenth century and characterized by the use of wide skirts) and as a skirt dancer in London (Sommer 1975; Sperling 2001). However, her work diverged from the dominant modes of presentation of the female dancing body on the popular stage in the late nineteenth century. As a number of theorists have argued, Fuller disrupted the heterosexual model of nineteenth-century dance performance, in which a female performer seduced the stereotypically male spectators (Coffman 2002; Garelick 1995; 2007; McCarren 1995; Townsend 2001). This transformation was achieved primarily through Fuller’s use of technology. Her most famous innovation was the use of rods attached to yards of fabric which enveloped and extended from her body, and onto which she projected coloured electric lights. By manipulating the

material, she could create images of butterflies or flowers, for example, which subsumed her. Enclosing herself within an undulating fabric screen, Fuller drew a veil between the audience and her body. This distinguished her from the popular belly dancers and Spanish dancers of the time, who flaunted their physical appeal, as noted by the art critic and collector Roger Marx in *La Revue Encyclopédique*:

Her success is due to the contrast between her kind of dancing and that to which we have recently been subjected. Too many danseuses have been giving poor imitations of 'the Andalusian's impish stomping' or have emphasised a swaying of the hips and a rotation of the pelvis, or have resorted to other bodily contortions. These women wear as little as they can get by with, and what they wear accentuates the buttocks and the breasts. Loïe Fuller is utterly different. She keeps her body straight, and she derives effects from the very profusion of her garments. (Marx cited in Current & Current 1997: 55)

By shifting the audience's attention away from her body, towards the images her dancing created in fabric, Fuller created a feminine physical performance that was considered morally 'decent' and artistically refined. Many contemporary commentators read Fuller's obscured body as desexualized; a journalist from *L'Echo de Paris* reported in 1892 that, 'there is no pornography, no coarseness, nothing but the most poetically artistic' (Anon. cited in Current & Current 1997: 52) in her performances.<sup>iii</sup>

This is not to say that Fuller's performances were always intended or interpreted as desexualized or disembodied. Ann Cooper Albright (2007) argues that the literature on Fuller has tended to over-play the dissolution of her body, portraying her as a technician rather than a dancer. Albright highlights Fuller's two interpretations of *Salomé*, performed in 1895 and 1907, which contrasted with the rest of her *oeuvre* by exposing her body to a greater extent. Fuller's performances as *Salomé* provoked critics to adopt the language of seduction usually reserved for cancan dancers and other *femmes fatales*. Marx's description of the 1895 production contrasts directly with the image of chastity painted in the above quotation: 'With a devilish coquetry, she waves her scintillating scarves, which reflect the terrifying flare of the underworld' (Marx cited in Albright 2007: 130). Rather than veiling herself, Fuller's movements appeared to reach out beyond the footlights, particularly in her final Dance of Fear, 'in which she reveals her tragic power, transmitting to her audience actual shudders of terror' (Anon. cited in Albright 2007: 138). Albright observes that both recent and contemporary critiques of Fuller's *Salomé* productions lament the loss of the screening, distancing devices that transformed Fuller's body in her other works. Richard and Marcia Current explain the disappointing critical reception of the 1895 version by noting that,

Loïe could be seen all too well in the Comédie Parisienne, an intimate theater with a small stage, where she was close to her audience in a way that she had never been at the Folies Bergère.... Hence she lost that aura of unreality, ineffability, and mystery that had made her seem a creature of poetic charm. (Current and Current cited in Albright 2007: 127)

As Albright points out, Fuller's performances as Salomé were not universally criticized, and they opened up performative possibilities that were shrouded in her other work. Indeed, the technique of seductively revealing and concealing the female body that Fuller had learnt in burlesque and music hall, and that came to the forefront in the Salomé performances, was present to a certain extent throughout her repertoire. However, the ambivalent critical reception of Fuller's Salomé pieces counterpoints and highlights the factor that made the rest of her work distinct from the more familiar dancing seductresses: her mechanization and rationalization of the alluring female dancer. The poet, novelist and critic Camille Mauclair observed that in Fuller's work, 'the traditional art of ancient oriental civilizations [was] extenuated by science' (Mauclair cited in Garelick 1995: 98), creating an image in which physical immediacy and technological mediation seamlessly coalesced (see also Coffman 2002).

### **Loïe Fuller and early cinema**

Another mediating device used by Fuller was a wall of transparent glass mounted between the audience and the performer. With the correct lighting, the glass acted as a one-way mirror through which the audience could see Fuller, but she could not see them (Garelick 1995). Spectators gained voyeuristic access to the separate world of the performer, rather than being directly seduced by her. This view through the keyhole was enticing, while maintaining a separation between spectator and spectacle. Rhonda Garelick compares Fuller's performance behind glass at the Exposition of 1900 with the display of 'native' women behind windows at the same event. She comments that '[l]ike the taxidermist's butterflies, these [native] women are images under glass to be admired as scientific oddities' (Garelick 1995: 93). The image of the butterfly placed under glass was a common motif of the control of nature by science in the late nineteenth century. But unlike the North African women, 'Fuller played both the butterfly and the taxidermist' (Garelick 1995: 95), both the Orientalized dancing other and the American/French scientist.

The capacity of the glass lens to capture and contain ephemeral beauty has often been associated with cinema, particularly dance on screen. For example, the film theorist Casey Charness has written the following on the capacity of film to record dance:

Dance seems to exist solely for its own sake, for the moment, and then it disappears, except as a memory. This quality is the tragedy

and beauty of dance. Because it can touch so deeply, but live so briefly, the urge to preserve it somehow, *like a butterfly under glass*, taunts, teases and eventually frustrates. (Charness 1976: 140, emphasis added)

The echoing of Garelick's phrase in Charness's, points towards the conceptual parallels between Fuller and film. Fuller's use of light, fabric and glass to augment and mediate her bodily performance has invited comparisons with cinema. Germaine Dulac, the avant-garde film director and theorist, said of Fuller's work, 'that also was cinema, the play of light and of colors in relief and in movement' (Dulac cited in Gunning 2003: 85). Sally Sommer, one of the first dance historians to research Fuller, considered that, '[c]entral to Fuller's performance was a moving image made animate by the projection of coloured light and slides' (Sommer 1975: 54). And Erin Brannigan (2003) expands Felicia McCarren's (2003) argument that Fuller embodied a new conception of movement as constant flux, rather than a series of static poses, that cinema would embrace.

However, such comparisons become problematic when Fuller is viewed specifically as a precursor to the early cinema that emerged only three years after her Parisian premiere and continued until around 1907. Early film theorist Tom Gunning (1990) argues that this period was dominated by an aesthetic that he calls the 'cinema of attractions'. This aesthetic can best be described by distinguishing it from the narrative cinema that, Gunning argues, rose to dominance by 1907. In narrative cinema, the actors do not acknowledge the spectators, but operate in a closed narrative world into which the spectator is drawn as a voyeur. By contrast, 'the cinema of attractions directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle' (Gunning 1990: 58). Performers in early film often break the 'fourth wall' of the cinema and directly address the audience. Whereas narrative cinema generally demands a psychologically involved but physically passive spectator, the cinema of attractions attempts to provoke physical reactions of shock, laughter and desire in its audiences.

Gunning himself has considered the relationship between Fuller and the cinema of attractions (Gunning 2003). He argues that Fuller pre-empted this aesthetic, citing as evidence a response she gave in an interview in 1910:

The Delicatessen man is indeed more likely than the educated man to grasp the meaning of my dances. He *feels* them. It is a question of temperament more than culture. My magnetism goes out over the footlights and seizes him so that he *must* understand – in spite of his delicatessen. (Fuller cited in Gunning 2003: 83, original emphasis)

This statement does resonate with the physically compelling mode of performance often used in the cinema of attractions. However, as discussed

above, this aspect of Fuller's practice was more often tempered by technological mediation. Gunning acknowledges this, citing the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, who wrote that Fuller's performances constituted, 'an intoxication of art and simultaneously an industrial achievement' (Gunning 2003: 82). Fuller did not fully embody the aesthetic of the attraction, as Gunning suggests, but rather transformed it into a spectacle that captivated poets as well as delicatessen men.

An alternative conception of Fuller's anticipation of early cinema is offered by French literature scholar Felicia McCarren (2003). McCarren lists as one of the similarities between Fuller and the cinema the fact that her performances were '[d]ifferent from the kind of show that offers itself to the gaze of fans' (McCarren 2003: 50). Here, McCarren emphasizes the distancing devices that distinguished Fuller from the titillating tactics of other *fin-de-siècle* dancers. However, these devices also separated Fuller from early film. While narrative cinema did eventually develop this aesthetic, the cinema of attractions was precisely the kind of show that offered itself to the gaze of fans.

Fuller's problematic relationship with the cinema of attractions is highlighted by comparing Gunning's and McCarren's arguments: Fuller is aligned with the cinema by these theorists both because she constructs herself as a hypnotic attraction (Gunning) and because she does not (McCarren). In fact, as Fuller herself declares, she did both at once: 'I want to create a new form of art, an art completely irrelevant to the usual theories, an art *giving to the soul and senses at the same time complete delight*' (Fuller cited in Albright 2007: 185, emphasis added). Both Gunning and McCarren acknowledge this complexity in Fuller's practice. But where this argument diverges from Gunning's and McCarren's is in aligning this simultaneous revelation and concealment of the body not with the cinema of attractions, but with the narrative cinema that succeeded it.

An important distinction between the cinema of attractions and narrative cinema can be made by focusing on the relationship between the performer (for example, a female dancer) and the cinematic technology through which her movement is reproduced. Early films usually consisted of a single, unedited scene shot from a static camera. Contemporary stage dance routines were a popular subject. The performers made only minor adjustments to their choreographies for filming, and performed directly to the camera as if it were an audience member. Therefore, the performance remained distinguishable from the visual technology that captured it. The filmed dancer still referred to a live performance that existed beyond the camera, and her interaction with the film spectator was direct, evoking the immediacy of a live encounter. Equally, as Gunning (1990) notes, the technology of the cinema was not hidden behind the illusion of a fictional reality, but was an attraction in itself, quite apart from its subject matter.

In narrative cinema, however, the dancer became engulfed in a separate cinematic world in which her performance was always already mediated and

rationalized by the narrative logic of the editing process. Performer and visual technology became indistinguishable, and therefore disappeared as separate entities. Walter Benjamin describes this 'tendency to promote the mutual penetration of art and science' as 'one of the revolutionary functions of the film' (Benjamin 1973: 229). The seductions of the dancer in narrative cinema reach the spectator not directly, but only through identification with onscreen characters. Therefore, her attraction is no longer her own, but melts into the attraction of the technological world that cinema creates.

It was this coalescence of the performing body and visual technology that Fuller pre-empted. She was inspired by the physical training system of François Delsarte, who claimed, echoing Benjamin, that from harnessing the powers of the body 'results the intimate fusion of art and science, which, though each one is born of a different source, nevertheless ally, interpenetrate and reciprocally prove each other' (Delsarte cited in Coffman 2002: 79-80). Albright, a dancer and scholar who has reworked Fuller's choreographies, reports that in this process she became more aware of 'the interconnected realms of dance and machine in Fuller's dancing... Fuller's theatrical mechanisms brought her closer to, rather than distancing her from, her sensate body' (Albright 2007: 187). The bodily and technological components of Fuller's work vanished into evocations of transforming images that subsumed both. This prefigured the revolutionary potential of film that Benjamin recognized in the 1930s: '[film] offers precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment' (Benjamin 1973: 227). As both Giovanni Lista and Brannigan (2003) have hinted, Fuller created an aesthetic ideal that the cinema could only fulfil after the emergence of the narrative mode: 'the cinema uniquely was able to equal, very much later, the effects of dematerialization and mobility of the image sought by Loïe' (Lista cited in Gunning 2003: 85).

By contrast, the cinema of attractions laid bare the constituent elements of the cinematic aesthetic before they had been synthesized. Early cinema was not a smooth fusion of body and machine. Rather, the animate body and the inanimate camera, still distinct entities, were brought into jarring combination, creating a confusion of the animate and inanimate. In 1906, eleven years after the first cinematic showing, psychologist Ernst Jentsch (1996) would label such a confusion *das unheimlich*/uncanny. This sensation is exemplified by the early film practice of presenting static images which then flickered into animation, generating an 'aesthetic of astonishment' (Gunning 1995). The impact of this moment was sometimes heightened by the patter of the showmen who introduced early films. Gunning cites Albert E. Smith's recollection of the voiceover given by his Vitagraph company co-founder J. Stuart Blackton over the still image of *Black Diamond Express* (1896):

In just a moment, a cataclysmic moment, my friends, a moment without equal in the history of our times, you will see this train take life

in a marvellous and most astounding manner. It will rush towards you, belching smoke and fire from its monstrous iron throat. (Smith cited in Gunning 1995: 120)

The horror of this spectre of the machine cranking to life is preserved in cinema's origin myth of spectators' reactions to the first screening of the Lumière brothers' *L'Arrivée d'un Train à la Ciotat/Arrival of a Train at Ciotat Station* (1895): 'spectators reared back in their seats, or screamed, or got up and ran from the auditorium (or all three in succession)' (Gunning 1995: 114). Uncanny discomfort and horror were not reactions associated with Fuller's performances (except the Salomé works), but these responses do make sense as part of a longer historical discourse of romantic responses to industrialization, emblemized by the image of the train, and linked more closely with certain dance and entertainment forms that pre-dated Fuller, particularly the cancan.

#### **'Dancing Machines':<sup>iv</sup> the cancan, the railway train and the cinema of attractions**

The Romantic Movement was, at least in part, a reaction against mechanization and rationalization in the Industrial Revolution. In particular, the rationalization of production by combining or replacing human labour with machines, led romantics to consider the threatening but fascinating possibility of the mechanized human body or automaton. Such dystopian visions were conjured in romantic literary works such as E.T.A. (or E.T.W.) Hoffmann's short story 'Der Sandmann/The Sandman' (1885), and Auguste Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's novel *L'Eve Future/Tomorrow's Eve* (1982). A theme in these works was the potential of the automaton, invariably gendered as female, to evade the rational control of its (male) masters, and seduce the latter, usually with fatal results. Often, this subversion of rationality was associated with the automaton dancing, an act which placed her on the uncanny boundary between the animate and inanimate (Hoffmann 1885; Jentsch 1996). Nineteenth-century performance played on this powerful ambiguity, often by reversing it: instead of an inanimate object dancing, the dancer performed as if s/he was an inanimate object. In so doing, performers attempted to harness the power of the automaton to exert a hypnotic pull on the spectator's mind.

One of the first manifestations of the mechanized dancing body was in the romantic *corps de ballet*, in which semi-human, feminine, mass-produced dancers created formations which emanated a seductive and sometimes dangerous power, such as the Wilis in *Giselle* (1841). The theme of dolls or puppets which come to life would form the central narrative of several ballets in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jackson 2001).<sup>v</sup>

The appearance of romantic ballet coincided with the emergence of another dance form that developed an alternative performance of human mechanization. The cancan emerged in the late 1820s in working-class dance halls on the

outskirts of Paris as improvised variations on the set choreographies of the quadrille. Initially performed by male dancers, but quickly adopted and developed by their female partners, the cancan embodied notions of irrationality and uncontrollability (see Parfitt 2008). The dance was characterized by the movement of isolated body parts, such as the legs, a mobile spine, percussive feet and hip movements and body contact between partners (Delord and Smith cited in Cordova 1999: 144 and 203; Sarcus reproduced in Price 1998: 27). The cancan was increasingly read as a manifestation of pathological hysteria, with these interpretations peaking in the *fin-de-siècle*, and one of the symptoms of this condition was thought to be contagious automatism – mechanical movements and automatic responses that bypass reason. These connotations inspired the romantic writer and theatre critic Théophile Gautier to compare the cancan to another symbol of industrialization, the train:

Imagine that one has dreamt up a contredanse entitled The Railway. It starts by imitating those frightful whistles which announce the trains' departures; the rattle of the machines, the clash of the buffers, the shunting back and forth of clanking iron are all perfectly imitated. Then there follows one of those hurried and breathless gallops, beside which the Sabbath's round is a peaceful dance. (Gautier cited in Cordova 1999: 144)

According to John Gage (1973: 393), Gautier, like several other romantics, was horrified by the new prospect of railway travel, which developed in the early 1830s alongside the cancan. What seems to have disturbed Gautier about the railway is the way its mechanism appears to bring it to life; in 1877 he described the headlights of the train in Joseph Turner's painting *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1844), as glass eyes dancing in the darkness (Gautier cited in Gage 1973: 393). The cancan appeared to Gautier to perform this uncanny dance of the machine.

Much of the appeal and threat of the image of the dancer reacting automatically to unconscious impulses, lay in its potential to awaken similar mechanical, instinctive, irrational urges in the spectator. The Belgian artist Edgar Baes described such a response witnessed at the Moulin Rouge: 'More than one [spectator] sticks his tongue out and twists his arms craving more, hypnotized by the hectic transports of a monstrous and degrading lack of decency' (Baes cited in Gordon 2001b: 97). The apparently automatic gestures of the dancers mesmerize the spectator, depriving him of the conscious will to resist mindless imitation of the mechanical movements before him. This embodied mode of spectatorship parallels that encouraged by the cinema of attractions.

Rae Beth Gordon (2001a; 2001b; 2009) argues that the performance of pathological automatism became the central aesthetic of a cabaret and café-concert scene that developed in Paris between 1865 and 1907. These performers drew on the mechanical gestures of hysteria (also known as epilepsy in the nineteenth century) to create acts with literally infectious appeal. Although



Gordon only briefly discusses the cancan (several short references in 2001b and a sub-section in 2009), it developed the pathological/mechanical style thirty-five years before popular interest in hysteria prompted more widespread use of the 'epileptic aesthetic' by a range of entertainers from 1865 onwards.

Gordon (2001a) proposes that the epileptic aesthetic of late nineteenth-century Parisian cabaret, in which the cancan participated, was carried into the cinema by performers who moved from stage to screen. Indeed, the cancan's mechanical movements, reminiscent of the railway, evoked the same uncanny image of the life-like machine as the cinema of attractions. The continuity between live performances of danced automatism and the emergence of cinema as a dancing machine, can be seen most clearly in the early single-shot films of dancers. Many of these films depicted cancan dancers (for example, *Quadrille Dansé par les Étoiles du Moulin-Rouge/Quadrille dance by Stars of the Moulin Rouge*, 1900). Imitators of Fuller were also very popular subjects, both in France and the United States (for example, *Danse Serpentine*, 1900 and *Serpentine Dance by Annabelle*, 1896). However, as both McCarren (2003: 62-63) and Elizabeth Coffman (2002: 86) note, Fuller's imitators performed not for a future, cinematic spectator, as Fuller did, but to seduce their immediate audience by revealing their legs and arms. Therefore, although these performers copied Fuller's choreography, they danced as part of the cinema of attractions, rather than anticipating cinema's future aesthetic, as Fuller had done.<sup>vi</sup> The uncanny attraction of the dancer as a mechanical seductress that had first developed in the live cancan, and that had been expanded into a broad performance aesthetic in the Parisian cabaret routines that Gordon describes, had pre-empted, and then became absorbed into, the uncanny attraction of cinema's automatic movement.<sup>vii</sup>

### Modernizing Spectatorship

The bourgeoisie had been excited and scandalized by the live dancing machine for most of the nineteenth century. However, at the end of the century, Fuller had pointed the way towards a different sort of entertainment, one in which the fatal feminine body was present, but behind the veil of technology. In comparison with this new ideal, the seductive immediacy of the cinema of attractions seemed retrograde. In 1913, the critic Louis Haugmard lamented that through the 'aesthetic of the cinematograph',

the charmed masses will learn to combat all will to reason... they will only know how to open their big and empty eyes, and look, look, look... The cinematograph will be [the only mode of] action for neurasthenics. (Haugmard cited in Gordon 2001a: 542)

The stupefying power of the cinema, according to Haugmard, encourages degeneration down the evolutionary scale into the primitive state of hysteria. The

bourgeoisie sought to distinguish themselves from these 'masses' by advocating alternative, more rational forms of cinema.

Before the cinema had even achieved its ideal integration of body and machine, the bourgeoisie began its construction of a new ideal cinematic spectator by rendering the old mode of spectatorship, defined by an embodied response to cinema's dancing machine, as primitive. Gunning notes that the violent response ascribed to the early spectators of *Arrival of a Train at Ciotat Station* is,

a state usually attributed to savages in their primal encounter with the advanced technology of Western colonialists, howling and fleeing in impotent terror before the power of the machine. (Gunning 1995: 114)

This primitive vulnerability to mechanical illusions was thought to be strongest in those sections of society that had been considered irrational throughout the nineteenth century. Noël Burch (1990) argues that early cinema was deemed suitable only for the lower classes, and among the bourgeoisie, only women and children. These groups were thought to prefer entertainment that was physically, not intellectually, stimulating (Anon. cited in Burch 1990: 49).

French, British and American filmmakers contributed to the degradation of embodied spectatorship by portraying it onscreen as irrational, highlighting its incongruity with the modern medium of cinema. For example, in *The Countryman and the Cinematograph* (Paul, 1901) and *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (Porter, 1902) (which appears to be a remake of the former), the physical reactions of a country bumpkin to a series of films are portrayed as comedic. In the Porter version, the first two films that Uncle Josh watches are previous Edison films, *Parisian Dance* (1897) and *Black Diamond Express* (1896). Here, two icons of embodied spectatorship are brought together: the cancan and the railway train. In response to *Parisian Dance*, Uncle Josh jumps out of his box and joins in the cancan, whereas the approaching train in *Black Diamond Express* causes him to leap back into his box in fright. In the third film, *The Country Couple*, Uncle Josh thinks he recognizes his daughter in a clinch with a young man, who he tries to punch, pulling down the projection screen to reveal an angry kinetoscope operator, with whom he proceeds to fight. Uncle Josh's embodied film spectatorship, which confuses image with reality, is shown to destroy the filmic illusion. In these examples embodied responses to the cinema are attributed to the spectator's inability to rationalize the spectacle, to separate her/himself from the performance, and therefore to resist its seductions.

In the first years of cinema, the embodied spectator was taken out of the auditorium, placed on the screen, drained of agency, and ridiculed as a source of low comedy. This allowed a new, modern viewing position to emerge. The properly cinematic spectator, this rhetoric implies, is one who recognizes the embodied mode of spectatorship as primitive, attached to a bygone era of

entertainment, and instead employs a modern approach to cinema, that of passive absorption in the narrative.

By veiling the attractions of her body behind fabric or glass, liberating the spectator from the irrational temptations of seduction, Fuller provided a model for the shift from the cinema of attractions to narrative cinema, in which the cinematic spectacle was placed behind a narrative screen, allowing a disembodied, modern viewing position. Behind the screen, the attraction was still visible, but its hypnotic threat was curtailed, allowing low entertainment to be transformed into an artform acceptable to bourgeois audiences.

In conclusion, despite the apparent similarities between Fuller's technological dance performances and the subsequent emergence of cinema, early film initially adopted a mode of presentation and spectatorship with a much longer history, based on the contagious irrationality of the uncanny dancing machine. This aesthetic emerged in the early nineteenth century, particularly in the cancan, and developed in the late nineteenth century into a popular entertainment model (Gordon 2001a; 2001b; 2009). As a short, spectacular act amongst other, live forms of entertainment, early cinema positioned itself as the latest and most modern in a long line of dancing machines for generating shocks, thrills and attractions. But tastes had already begun to change, influenced, at least in part, by Fuller's seamless coalescence of liveness and mediation. The *fin-de-siècle* bourgeois fascination with 'lowlife', on which the Moulin Rouge had capitalized, was giving way to a desire for more mediated entertainment, attended by absorbed but passive spectators. By 1902 the Moulin Rouge was forced to modernize; the mingling of spectators and performers in the dance hall was replaced by a variety theatre showing revues - large-scale shows in which the female body was exhibited as a mass-produced, anonymous spectacle. The cancan began a dramatic transformation from an embodiment of irrationality to the regimented kickline of the 1920s (Parfitt 2008; Price 1998). At the turn of the twentieth century, the cinema underwent its own metamorphosis. Like Fuller, the cinema veiled its attractions behind a gauze of rationality, diverting the performer's gaze away from the spectators into a closed, linear, narrative world. In Bruno Latour's (2000) terms, the threatening, contagious hybridity of embodied performer/spectator relations in the cinema was purified. However, Latour argues that this ideal of purification in modernity was never fully achieved, that hybrids continued to proliferate, and that our claims to be modern belied the tumult just beneath the surface. Indeed, Gunning suggests that the cinema of attractions did not disappear under the weight of narrative, rather it went 'underground' (1990: 57), forming 'an undercurrent flowing beneath narrative logic and diegetic realism' (Gunning 1995: 123), and re-emerging in the 1920s in avant-garde film and film musicals. The butterfly under glass continued to dance, awaiting the further transformations that the twentieth century would bring.

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Charness 1976, p. 140.

<sup>ii</sup> Garelick 1995, p. 86.

<sup>iii</sup> Julie Townsend (2001) has interpreted this supposed desexualisation as a lesbian reconfiguration of heterosexuality.

<sup>iv</sup> McCarren 2003.

<sup>v</sup> These included *Coppélia* (Saint-Léon, 1870), an adaptation of 'The Sandman', *Die Puppenfee/The Fairy Doll* (Hassreiter, 1888), and two ballets produced for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes: *Petrushka* (Fokine, 1911), and *La Boutique Fantasque/The Magic Toy Shop* (Massine, 1919), an adaptation of *Die Puppenfee* (see Jackson 2001).

<sup>vi</sup> There is some debate as to whether any films of Fuller herself exist; compare Lista cited in Brannigan (2003, note 12) with Coffman (2002). Elizabeth Coffman states that Fuller also directed two films: *Fire Dance* (1906) and *Le Lys de la Vie/The Lily of Life* (1920).

<sup>vii</sup> Robert Allen (1991) outlines a slightly different process in the American context, arguing that the live attraction of burlesque was extinguished by the mediation of film. Lynda Nead (2005) marginalises the connection between the hypnotic effect of early film and that of live performance, claiming that the embodied spectator was invented by cinema.

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